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THE SILVER SWAN

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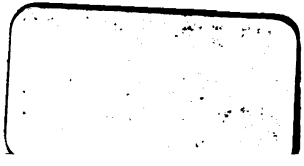

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THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER.

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER.

THE SILVER SWAN.

A Fairy Tale.

BY

MADAME DE CHATELAIN.

LONDON:

GRANT AND GRIFFITH,

SUCCESSORS TO

J. HARRIS, CORNER OF ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

M.DCCC.XLVII.

J. BETTLEY · WILSON & PLEYDELL

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THE SILVER SWAN

A FAIRY TALE.

CHAPTER I.

AT about half an hour's walk from the now frequented and fashionable little watering-place called Bad-Ems, there once stood a straggling hamlet, long since swallowed up by the modern spirit of improvement, that in olden times boasted an inn affording excellent accommodation for man and beast (at least so it professed), and kept by the most honest landlord in all Nassau, according to his own assertions on the subject.

The Silver Swan was, in fact, the best inn the place afforded, seeing that it was the only one.

And, perhaps, the landlord's boast might be true likewise, without his being exempt from the usual charges against his race, for to be best among bad is no great compliment after all. However that may be, he had all the custom to himself; and, whether through real industry, or from making the most of every traveller chance threw in his way, Master Kaspar Kellermann was in a tolerably thriving condition at the period we refer to.

The day had just drawn to its close, and "mine host" was sitting in the chimney-corner enjoying his pipe, when the appearance of a noble-looking visitor aroused him from his blissful indulgence, and reminded him, half unpleasantly, that his labours were of that nature that can never be said to be completed.

Master Kaspar, however, was too much a man of business not to put a good face on an interruption that promised to be a very profitable one, judging from the dress and appearance of the

stranger; he, therefore, advanced towards him with the most obsequious respect, and after informing him that his best bed-room was, fortunately, vacant, inquired whether he should put his lordship's horses into the stable.

Now, best bed-room, in this case, meant nearly the same as best inn in the village—it was the only one! but it would have sounded very badly not to have offered the best of everything to a fine gentleman dressed in silk and velvet, with a gold chain round his neck, and a hat and feather fit for a king; and it seemed to satisfy the stranger, for he nodded his head by way of expressing his approbation, at the same time informing the landlord that he had no horses with him.

"What! no horses and no carriage!" thought Kellermann, examining the new comer from head to foot. "Odd enough, to be sure!" added he unconsciously, loud enough to be heard.

"What is odd?" inquired the stranger, with a haughty, penetrating glance at the landlord.

"Oh—nothing," replied the latter, "only I was surprised that your lordship and retinue should be travelling on foot. But of course each has a right to please himself."

"More especially as I have no retinue with me," coldly observed the stranger.

The landlord, somewhat disappointed in his high-flying expectations, showed the way, nevertheless, to the sitting-room, resolved, in his own mind, that the magnificent stranger should pay as much as if the retinue had filled his barn and his stables, and after presenting him a chair, inquired what "his honour" would like for supper; for he thought it needless to address, as "his lordship," one who had neither horses, carriage, nor servants; and, without waiting for an answer, he proceeded to detail all the contents of his larder in the most tempting colours imaginable.

But his eloquence proved fruitless, as the stranger's only reply to his long harangue was summed up in the few words, "I never sup."

"Mighty strange!" thought the landlord, more and more vexed with a customer of this kind; "then what will your worship have?" inquired he in a chagrined tone.

"Rest!" answered the stranger, waving his hand to put a stop to all further parleying.

The landlord felt awed by his imperious manner, and quickly left the room.

"Wife," said he, on returning to the kitchen, and addressing a cheerful-looking dame, whose good plight showed that she never neglected her supper, "I don't like our new visitor at all. For all his fine clothes I suspect him to be nothing better than a thief."

"A thief!" ejaculated his wife, "why what notions you do take into your head, good-man! A thief, indeed! with those white hands and grand manners! I'm sure I'd swear he can be nothing less than an earl!"

"Yes, a thief," persisted the landlord, "or else would he come skulking here without so much as

a horse, let alone his having no servants with him?"

"Oh, I dare say he has been a-hunting," replied the housewife, "and got lost, and his servants will be here by and bye looking after him. I shouldn't wonder if he were some prince or other by his looks. But here we are standing idle, and I'm sure he must want his supper."

"No," said Kellermann, "he never sups,—what do you think of that, dame?"

"Why, that it is clear he must be a fine gentleman and no thief."

"I don't like people who never sup," muttered Kaspar.

"Or you would hate yourself," observed his wife, laughing at her own joke.

An authoritative rap on the table, in the room where the stranger was sitting, put an end to the dialogue between the landlord and his better half, and the latter went to inquire his pleasure.

"Light," said he.

The landlady presented him with her lamp, apologizing, at the same time, for having left him in the dark. The stranger made no reply, but walked towards the door with a stately step.

"Shall I show your lordship to your chamber?" said Dame Trude, with all the courtesy which the stranger's gold chain, lace collar, and velvet mantle, seemed to call for.

His lordship smiled, as much as to say it was not necessary, and having bowed a good night to his hostess, went upstairs, threaded a narrow passage that ran along the house, and opening the door of the room destined for him, just as if he had been to the inn fifty times before, locked himself into his chamber.

Trude felt astonished, and almost uneasy at his strange ways, and waited for awhile in the passage, to see what he would do next. But as all was soon quite quiet within the chamber, and even the light extinguished, she glided down stairs, and went and told her husband, triumphantly, how

politely the gentleman had bowed to her; which proved beyond a doubt, according to her logic, that he could not be a thief.

But Kellermann, who had not got over the vexation of harbouring a non-supping traveller, was very bitter on the stranger, and maintained he must either be a stingy fellow, or else a magician, to be able to live upon air; while Trude insisted upon it that a high-born gentleman was never hungry like a clown, and that she was sure he must have a well-filled purse, and that they would be amply compensated for his lodging, even if he ate nothing at all.

To all this Kaspar only shook his head incredulously, and assured his wife that something misgave him from the first, that they would see no more of the stranger's money than he would of their eatables.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning the active couple were astir at an early hour, and the wife began preparing a very savoury breakfast for the stranger. But Kellermann looked coldly on all these preparations. He was vexed that a fowl had been killed on purpose for the stranger "for who knows," said he, "whether he means to breakfast at all?" And he was half provokd at the pains his helpmate was taking to get up a dainty meal for the disdainful traveller.

"Let me alone, good-man," quoth the wife, "I'll serve him up such a breakfast, that, let him be ever so little inclined to eat, the mere smell shall make him as hungry as a hunter. Do you

but go and fetch up a bottle of our oldest wine, and he shall feast like a prince—as he no doubt is."

"I 'll tell you what, dame," said the landlord doggedly, "he shall neither have wine nor bread either, till I have seen the colour of his money."

"Now surely," said Trude coaxingly, "you wouldn't have him return to his father's court, and tell everybody that the landlord of the Silver Swan is a churl, that refuses a traveller a crust or a sop, unless it be on good security. And think on the contrary, what fine things he'll say of us, if we treat him according to his rank — and who knows, Kaspar, but what it may lead in the end to making our fortune?"

"Tut! Gertrude, his father's kingdom is in the moon or some such place, I suspect," replied Kellermann, half softened by his wife's brilliant prognostics.

"What of that?" answered the housewife with great simplicity, "if he takes us there in a coach

and six, and makes a lord of you and a lady of me, I don't know why we should object. Wouldn't you like to have a gold chain like him, and to see me in feathers and satin, and have our children brought up like courtiers?"

"Well I'll fetch up the wine," said Kellermann, "that can't do us much harm at any rate."

And so saying, the landlord went, half reluctantly, half confiding in the good fortune that might possibly befall him, into the depths of the cellar, to choose a bottle of Rhenish wine. He had intended at first to bring up a specimen of the worst vintage, such as he was wont to place on the table of his chance customers of low degree, but after reviewing the goodly regiment before him, he began to soliloquize after this fashion: "After all, if a bottle of good wine is to make my fortune, the speculation is no bad one—and Trude may be right in her conjectures—for she is sharp enough sometimes—faith I

should like vastly to become a great lord! so here goes for the twenty years old—Baron Kellermann would sound as noble as the best of them—I may as well do the thing handsomely at once." And with this the landlord and future lord had reached the furthest extremity of the cellar, and had drawn forth from under a thick veil of cobwebs, a bottle of choice wine numbering twenty autumns.

On emerging from his subterranean treasure into the light of day, Kaspar returned to the kitchen, and placing the dusty bottle on the table, looked round for his wife, who had meantime gone upstairs to let the gentleman know his breakfast was ready.

Presently Gertrude returned very much flustered, and with a look of bewilderment impossible to describe.

"The lord is gone!" cried she.

"The plague he is!" exclaimed Kaspar, "but are you sure?"

"It is but too true," replied Gertrude, "and what is more, he must have been gone before we were up, for Hans, who is returned from the other side of the forest, met just such a person two hours since."

"Then we have been deceived and cheated," exclaimed Kaspar, "and all because you, dame, were so taken with his fine clothes. And who knows what he may have carried off with him besides?" continued the anxious landlord, hastily darting off to see if his valuables were safe.

Finding all as usual in the cupboard that served as his strong box, Kellermann was able to talk the matter over more calmly, and observed, that though it was bad enough to have cooked eatables for nobody, still they had come off cheaply, since, in fact, the stranger had got nothing of them except a night's lodging.

But Trude could not refrain from tears. She had screwed up her imagination to such a pitch about the illustrious guest, and was so set on

his being a king's son who was to make a courtier of her husband, and little lordlings of Johann and Ulric; and a fine lady of the miniature of herself called Trudchen, that she could not bear to come down to plain matter of fact, but set to bewailing the hard fate of innkeepers, who were always preparing delicacies they knew not for whom.

"And mistaking thieves for earls and princes!" cried Kellermann, who could not help chuckling at his superior perspicacity in having suspected the stranger from the first.

"To think," continued the disconsolate landlady, "that we have lost all hopes of ever riding in a gilt coach, and rising in the world!"

"After all, dame, the gilt carriage and the gentleman's kingdom never existed but in your brain," observed Kaspar, "so let's have no more crying; perhaps we shall get a better customer another time."

But neither Kellermann's jokes nor consolations availed much to comfort poor Gertrude, till an

idea suddenly struck her, and she exclaimed, brightening up: "I dare say he has left us a purse behind, and I'll go and look for it. Such a fine gentleman could never be so mean as to cheat such poor folks as we."

And off Gertrude flew to the chamber the traveller had occupied, and searched in every corner with the keen eyes of a treasure-seeker. No purse, however, could she find, and the only vestige that remained of the stranger was a green silk night-cap, which she met with on ransacking the bed.

"A fine rich prize, truly!" cried she, holding up the cap contemptuously to Kellermann, who had crept after her to ascertain the results of her investigation.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Kaspar, "this is poetical justice, as Lawyer Wirrwarr says of himself, when he is in his cups and is rhyming! He had nothing but a night's lodging, and so he pays a night-cap for it."

Even Gertrude could not now help joining in the laugh, and like a thrifty housewife, she put the night-cap by, observing that it would do as well as another the next time her husband wanted a new one.

CHAPTER III.

FOR many days Gertrude would inquire every morning of Hans, the plough-boy, groom, and waiter to the Silver Swan, whether the stranger had not been seen in the neighbourhood, as she fancied he meant to return; and for awhile too the prudent couple were more cautious how they trusted people; but by degrees this feeling wore away, and after a time even the magnificent traveller faded away from their thoughts, while the cap lay forgotten in a drawer under a heap of other things.

It was just six months, day for day, since this little check had occurred in their otherwise smooth career, when one evening a jovial-faced, laughing-eyed man, of considerable rotundity of person,

entered the court-yard, mounted on a sleek well-fed mare, just suited to the rider. Having dismounted with some little difficulty, and a post-boy's assistance, he entered the inn, and slapping the landlord on the shoulder in a familiar manner, desired to have the best supper the house could afford, and the best bottle of wine in the cellar. Kaspar started to his feet, and began bustling about, observing to his wife with a knowing wink, that these were the right sort of travellers, and that they must make hay while the sun shone. But Gertrude didn't seem to think that the sun shone at all, by the reluctance with which she set about her work. She didn't like the looks of the stranger; there was a cunning twinkle in his eye that boded no good, and at any rate she was sure he would eat twice as much as another man.

"I warrant he will," cried Kellerman joyously, "and drink in proportion too. He is none of your lean fine gentlemen who live upon air."

This remark reminded Gertrude of the well nigh forgotten stranger, and she observed drily that the fat gentleman might very likely eat and drink double what anybody else would, and not pay even half what others did. But Kaspar was in a confiding mood. He had seen the new comer give a piece of silver to the post-boy, who had helped him off his mare, and argued naturally enough that all was to be in proportion; he therefore bustled about the house, from kitchen to cellar, and prepared a supper fit to feast the chapter of Cologne, or to gratify the diet of Hungary itself.

The stranger ate and drank to his heart's content, and after picking the bones of a turkey, and draining the fifth bottle of the landlord's thirty years' old vintage, he was so far advanced in the enjoyment of his 'fool's paradise,' that he had to be supported to his chamber, where, after depositing him on to the bed, the landlord prudently locked him up.

Great was the wonderment of Trude as she washed up the empty dishes, at the voracious appetite of the jovial traveller; nor was she better pleased when her husband informed her of the number of bottles he had drained; she only hoped they might not be disappointed after all their trouble—that was all. For herself she washed her hands of the matter, as she didn't like the fat gentleman's looks from the first.

"Be easy on that score, dame," said Kellerman, "he is more cunning than I take him for if he can get at his mare without my knowing it; I have locked up the stable—and him too, for the matter of that."

CHAPTER IV.

ON the following morning, Hans came and asked his master for the key of the stable, to give the gentleman's mare a feed. The landlord gave him the key, bidding him be sure and lock the door again immediately.

Presently Hans returned with a look of dismay to inform his master no horse of any kind was to be seen in the stable. Kellermann looked blank, yet scarcely believing it could be possible, seeing he had locked the door himself, trusted that Hans had, as usual, made some blunder in his reckoning, and immediately went to view the premises himself.

True enough, no horse was forthcoming, nor did it appear on cross-questioning Hans, that

the door was broken open; on the contrary, he repeatedly assured his master it was locked and double locked before he had applied the key to it.

Never had the lord of the Silver Swan been more sorely perplexed. By what means the mare could have escaped was a complete mystery, and he accordingly searched the hay-loft and the grange, and all the probable and improbable places he could think of, but failing in his endeavours, he desired Hans to look in the meadow and the orchard, and to spare no pains to bring back the fugitive; for should the master of the mare not be flown, he would get into a scrape, and be accused of stealing the beast from its lawful owner.

Meanwhile Dame Gertrude, who had watched the beginning of this scene between the master and man, flew up stairs to the door of the traveller's chamber, and rapped loud enough to waken the dead. No answer was returned.

"He hasn't yet slept off the effects of the wine," said she to herself; and again she thundered away with no gentle hand.

Presently she grew bolder from desperation; and unlocking the door, peeped in, when instead of the dead-asleep drunkard she expected to behold, she only perceived the print of his heavy body just as he had been laid down on the preceding night, and nothing that indicated his having slept there, except a red worsted night-cap that lay on the bolster.

"Here, Kaspar," cried she to her discomfited husband, whom she met at the foot of the stairs coming in from the yard, "here's good pay for a turkey and five bottles of wine, besides a night's lodging and corn for the mare."

So saying, she held up the cap in derision. Kellermann was so enraged at having been duped a second time, that he snatched the cap from his wife's hand, and flung it over his shoulder so petulantly that it broke a pane in the window

behind him, and fell on the stones outside with a ringing noise.

"It sounds like money," said Kellermann; "why didn't you tell me, wife, that there was something in it — you made me break the window with your foolish joke. Money's money," continued he more cheerfully, "whether in a night-cap or a purse." So saying, he went out to pick up the cap.

"It's only the sound of the glass breaking," observed Gertrude, "for there was no money in it when I brought it you."

By this time Kellermann had picked up the cap in which, sure enough, were five pieces of silver.

"Here's something to comfort us at any rate, and to pay for the window," said the landlord counting out the money into his astonished wife's hand; "you see, the fat gentleman isn't so shabby as you thought."

"Yet," persisted Gertrude, "the money was

not there just now, or it would have fallen out, as I held up the cap by its tassel; for if you recollect, good-man, you snatched it from me thus, and flung it away in this manner."

So saying, Trude mimicked her husband's angry gesture, and again the cap fell on the ground with the same welcome jingle as before.

"This is very extraordinary," quoth Kaspar, again drawing five pieces of silver from this new kind of purse, "one would think it coined money."

"Let 's try again," cried Gertrude.

Again the experiment was renewed, and again and again the same delightful results took place. By the time Kaspar had filled his pocket with silver, he fell on his wife's neck crying out that their fortune was made, and that they would ride in a coach and six without the help of the fine gentleman."

"Who knows," exclaimed Gertrude, "but what his cap may be of the same kind?"

So saying, she ran and fetched it, and her husband threw it first over one shoulder, then over another, but all to no purpose. So they concluded it was a mere ordinary cap, and it was again consigned to the oblivion of the drawer with every mark of contempt.

"It is a pity it is only silver," observed Kaspar, in whom the organ of acquisitiveness began to develope itself with fearful rapidity; "for it will take some time now before we get a very large sum."

Nevertheless the intoxicated couple agreed that they would invite their friends to a merry-making for the next day; and in order that Kaspar might work uninterruptedly all day at filling their strong box, they at once determined that they would refuse any travellers who should ask for admittance under the pretence of being full. And so Kaspar locked himself up in his room, as they shrewdly resolved not to let Hans or any one else get wind of the source of their

newly-found wealth, or the precious night-cap would presently be stolen from them.

Meanwhile Gertrude, after filling her purse fuller than it had ever been filled before, ordered out the cart and horse, and repaired to the nearest market-town."

"I shall soon ride in a coach and six," thought she to herself as she got into the cart almost contemptuously; "and Hans," cried she aloud, "wouldn't you like to be coachman to a great lord?"

"Nay, mistress, you be laughing at me," replied the simple lad.

"Laugh or not," replied Gertrude, "if we grow rich, why shouldn't we have a coach like other people, and gold-laced liveries, and a coachman and footmen?"

Hans stared in amazement, and was half inclined to fancy his mistress was out of her wits. He ventured, however, to observe that they must have a many customers better than last night's

So saying, she ran and fetched it, and her husband threw it first over one shoulder, then over another, but all to no purpose. So they concluded it was a mere ordinary cap, and it was again consigned to the oblivion of the drawer with every mark of contempt.

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indeed a Swan should,) and that prosperity spoils some folks.

When the turkeys, fowls, venison, and the rest of the things were stowed away into the cart, they formed so high a pile that Hans couldn't find any room to sit, so he was obliged to walk beside the horse, and hold the reins, while his mistress sat enthroned among the eatables, as proud as a queen. But pride they say is doomed to have a fall, and so it proved; for in spite of all the pains Hans took to guide his beast through the somewhat narrow precincts of the market, the monstrous cargo came in contact with one of the stalls, and was scattered in all directions.

A roar of laughter burst from the surrounding spectators, while Dame Trude, who at all other times would have got down to help to pick up her goods, was too grand to move, but bit her lips in silent vexation. Some came forward to help, and others to stare at the mischief. As to poor Hans he was half bewildered, for while the fish

were floating down the gutter, rejoicing in their congenial element, a dog was making away with a large ham, and a swarm of boys were scrambling for the fruit that was rolling about in all directions.

"Can't you help a body?" said Gertrude tartly, to the bystanders; "instead of standing gaping there?"

"Can't you come down and help yourself?" said the ringleader of the pillaging urchins.

"Mercy on us, Dame Kellermann!" exclaimed one of the market folks, "why what lots of things,—here 's enough to victual the Silver Swan for a twelvemonth. I count you 'll make a pretty good profit on them,—unless," he added thoughtfully, "they get spoiled before customers come."

"Hold your foolish tongue, you addle-pated jackanapes!" retorted the exasperated landlady, "a deal you know about swans or geese either,—these dainties aren't for chance travellers, but for a few friends whom we expect to-morrow."

"I should think she can't have many friends anyhow," muttered one among the crowd, concluding naturally enough that the usually good-natured Gertrude was a complete vixen.

Again a vociferous laugh went round even amongst those who were most willing to help. "Here, Hans," said Gertrude, "never mind picking up any more, but just take this money and go and buy all that 's missing;—and as for those who have stolen my goods, I 'll have the law of them, and it shan't be want of cash that 'll stop me. Here 's more than enough to fee Lawyer Wirrwarr," she added, triumphantly, shaking her purse at the beholders.

This harangue had its effect. All the market-people slunk back to their stalls in hopes of selling something to a customer so regardless of money, and the rest, fearing they had got into a scrape, were glad to skulk off as fast as they could.

Hans soon returned with fresh articles to replace the lost ones, but informed his mistress

in great dismay, that he had been obliged to pay double the price she had paid before for them.

"Never mind," said Gertrude, calmly; "let 's go home."

Hans was more and more amazed, but feeling tongue-tied, only cast now and then a sheep's eye on the cart load, and wondered what such thrifty folks as his employers could be thinking of to lay in such a stock merely to feast their friends, particularly when there was neither a birthday nor a christening in the family, nor was he any nearer the mark by the time they reached home.

The moment the contents of the cart were safely lodged in the pantry, Dame Gertrude bid Hans take a fresh horse, and go off and invite Lawyer Wirrwarr, and the bailiff, the doctor, Farmer Michel and his family, and some dozen others, to a merry-making that was to be held the following day at their house.

"And mind you tell them nothing," said she, with a knowing look, forgetting that Hans, though holding many offices at the Silver Swan, did not fill that of lord of the treasury.

"Very well, mistress," said Hans, "I understand."

Gertrude then went up to see how her husband was getting on with his new work. She found him sitting on a chair, quite exhausted with his exertions, but surrounded by a goodly heap of silver. He declared himself to be as tired as if he had been thrashing for six hours at a stretch.

Dame Gertrude then took up the night-cap to have a few throws that no time might be lost, but having a basket on her right arm, she took it in her left hand and flung it to the right, in rather an awkward fashion. Kellermann laughed at what he considered a failure, when on picking up the cap, to his no small surprise and joy, he found it contained three pieces of gold. He capered

about the room in an extasy of joy at this new discovery.

"Fool that I was," exclaimed he, "to have wasted all the morning, when, if I had but flung it over the right shoulder, I should have had a pile of gold around me by this time."

And though his arm ached from his recent exertions, he was not so tired but what he was willing to begin anew.

"But where shall we put all this silver?" said Kaspar, "I wish now I hadn't made so much, as it's bulk renders it more difficult to hide than gold."

After deliberating for awhile, they came to the conclusion that they would bury it in the garden, in order to leave every receptacle they possessed empty, since Pactolus itself was about to flow into their house. Accordingly that same night Kaspar dug a hole in the garden, and with his wife's help, stowed away all the silver coinage of the morning.

CHAPTER V.

THE next day the whole household was busy preparing for the feast. The largest room in the inn was set out with several tables all loaded with substantial fare mixed with every dainty that a banquet got up on such short notice would admit of. Nothing now was wanting save the guests, but they seemed unusually remiss in attending to so agreeable a summons; and when an hour had elapsed, the Kellermanns began to be afraid everything would be spoilt before they arrived. They therefore called up Hans in a great pucker, and asked him whether he was sure he had been round to everybody.

"Yes, master; oh! yes, quite sure," was the reply.

"And what did you say to each?" inquired the landlord.

"I said nothing," replied Hans, "for that was mistress's order."

Kaspar flew into such a rage at this piece of stupidity on the part of his menial, that he had nearly flung the contents of one of the dishes at his head. On recollecting himself, however, he thought it would be best to try and remedy the blunder as far as possible, by sending immediately to all his intended guests; but not trusting to Hans' messages any more, he told him to go and fetch half a dozen labourers, and to bring in as many horses at the same time.

"But, master," said Hans, where am I to get so many horses?"

"Go round to the neighbours and say I want horses, and give any price they ask for them,—but make haste, or the dinner will not be fit to eat."

Hans stared at this singular order, and per-

haps would have hesitated obeying, had not his master literally pushed him out of the room.

In an incredibly short space the animals were brought into the yard by their owners, curious to see what great man the horses were for, and how the landlord of the Silver Swan could make such sweeping offers. They were still more surprised when Kaspar came out with a bag in his hand, and silencing the chorus of praises the group set up, each in favour of his beast, asked their terms, and paid down the money without bargaining or hesitation. The owners would fain have lingered in the yard, expecting some king, *incog.*, had put up at the Silver Swan; but Kellermann, having cleared the place with as imperious a wave of his hand as a soldier on duty, motioned his six improvised couriers to come forward, and having promised a magnificent reward to every man jack of them, if they went at the top of their speed, his messengers were soon flying in every direction.

The natural results of such an out of the way proceeding might have been easily foreseen. The six peasants told everybody they met how Kaspar had purchased the horses at any price; nor were the six messengers one whit more discreet, but informed the servants of all the houses they went to, that their masters and mistresses must come as it was a matter of life and death, since they had each been promised three pieces of gold for their trouble. The news of Kaspar's extraordinary fortune or madness spread through the village like wildfire, and by the time the guests reached the inn, half alarmed at the summons, a crowd of villagers and country folks had gathered round the house wondering what it was all about.

"Here we are, neighbour," said Farmer Michel, who was the first to come in, "I was to have gone over to my brother's to help him with his harvest, but as it seemed to be important I wouldn't leave you in the lurch. So without more words, what 's to be done?"

"Only to help to demolish what 's before you," said Kaspar, "for you see, my dame and I have come into a little property, and so I wished you and a few other friends to drink to my prosperity, —that 's all."

"Well," said Michel, "with all my heart, only as I can't be of any service to you, I must not stay long; for holidays, you know, neighbour, don't fill a man's pocket."

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Kaspar, "but I mean to set the whole village a holiday-making to-day, though it should empty my night— my pocket completely."

So saying, Kaspar went out to the people assembled round the inn, and told them to fetch a fiddler, and to dance to their hearts' content, and they should want neither for eating nor drinking.

Next came the lawyer in a bustle, thinking the landlord had been robbed, and the doctor expecting somebody was ill, and in short, whether from

good-will or curiosity, the whole set came pouring in nearly at once.

"He seems half out of his wits, anyhow," observed Michel to his wife, as Kaspar was running about dressed in his holiday clothes, and with his cash-box in the shape of a red night-cap stuck upon his head, welcoming his friends, and giving orders to the supernumerary servants he had hired for the day.

As to Dame Gertrude, she was more collected. She thought herself so grand a personage now in all her finery, with the addition of a plume of feathers that towered above her head, that she hardly cared to be over familiar with any of her guests. Yet as the feast proceeded her natural good-humour would burst out now and then in spite of all her endeavours to play the fine lady. She had not yet been rich long enough to have lost all neighbourly sympathy.

The guests marvelled not a little at the variety and abundance of the dishes set before them, and

while congratulating Kellermann on his change of fortune, each was silently estimating what might be the probable amount of his riches, to allow of such profusion. They were yet more at a loss what to think when a carriage drove up to the door, and Hans came and told his master that some travellers wanted a night's lodging, on hearing Kellermann desire his servant to say that they might go elsewhere, as he was engaged.

"Nay," said Michel, "as long as the Silver Swan hangs over the door, it won't do to turn away custom,—and, after all, neighbour," continued he, lowering his voice, "money comes, but money goes, and it 's better to take all we can get in a fair way."

But Kellermann did not relish the advice: "Take down the sign," vociferated he to his people, "this is no longer an inn."

Hans meanwhile came back rather flustered: "Surely, master," said he, "you will think better of it, and not refuse a night's lodging to a holy

Bishop on his way to the convent beyond the mountains. And who," he added, in a low voice, " wont serve us as the other fat gentleman did."

" Oh ! by no means," cried Kaspar, " I 'll admit him—as a friend. Let him come in and join us."

Accordingly, the Bishop, after passing through the group of villagers, who suspended their dancing to make their obeisances to him, was ushered into the banquet-room, when every one rose out of respect, and he was led up and seated between the husband and wife.

The Bishop made a very hearty meal on the substantial viands before him, and drank the good old wine Kaspar had provided, with great apparent relish ; and when he had satisfied his appetite, he inquired what was the occasion of the gala he had so unexpectedly come to be mixed up in, and whether any child was to be christened. On Kaspar's explaining the occasion of the feast, as far as he had done to his friends, the Bishop could not

resist the temptation of reading him a short lecture on the vanity of worldly wealth, and expressed a hope he would not neglect to make, now and then, a pious use of his riches, and so forth—all of which ended in his suggesting that a gift to the convent he was now about to visit would be as meritorious a mode of spending money as any other. Kellermann took the hint as it was meant, and stealing out of the room went and fetched a flour-sack.

"Now, holy father," said he to the Bishop, "if I fill this, do you think it will be considered sufficient to obtain the blessing of the monks?"

At this the guests one and all burst out a-laughing, for they could not but think either that Kaspar was beside himself, or that he was playing off some prank on the holy man, and they waited impatiently to see how it would end.

But the Bishop coloured with delight, as he meekly said: "Amen, my son."

"Very well," said Kaspar, resuming his seat at

table, "to-morrow when you set off, it shall be ready for you."

"My very dear son," replied the Bishop, "human life is but a frail tenure, and no time is like the present. I would rather go on, if you can but let me have fresh horses, as my brethren are anxiously expecting me. Moreover it is not fit that I should be amongst so much gaiety, and yet I should be sorry to check such harmless mirth."

"As you please, father," answered Kellermann, "you shall have the horses, and the bag shall be filled without delay."

He then went out, and having emptied the contents of one of his boxes into the sack, he lifted it on to his shoulder, and returned to the scene of festivity, and placed it beside the bishop, merely saying: "Here is the gold, father," as any one else might have said, "Here are the hops," or "here is the corn."

The Bishop was not one to be caught with chaff,

at least not willingly; he therefore opened the sack to ascertain whether all *was* gold that glittered, and eyed its contents with a greedy look. The guests all rose on tip-toe to peep in likewise, and their intended jeers were changed to mute astonishment. Nor were their tongues set loose, till the Bishop, still clutching the bag, which, notwithstanding his years, he seemed well able to carry, had pronounced a blessing over them all, and left the room attended by Kellermann and his wife. Then, indeed, there arose a confusion of tongues outvying that of Babel itself, and there was no end to the wondering, as to the source of the enormous wealth Kaspar seemed to possess, especially as no one had ever heard him or his wife boast of any rich relations.

Meantime, as Kaspar was accompanying the Bishop across the yard, a thought struck him, and he said: "Reverend father, I wish to be a Baron, will it please your holiness to make me one, and to make Gertrude a Baroness?"

"My son," replied the Bishop, "it is not in my power to grant your wish?"

"Then make me a Duke," persisted Kaspar, "and that will do as well."

"Neither Duke nor Baron can I make," answered the Bishop, meekly, "it behoves me not to dispense earthly titles. That rests with our monarch."

"Then, father," continued Kaspar, "as you are hand and glove with both kings and Pope, pray get me made a Baron, for I wish of all things to be noble; and every year will I send you such another sack full of gold for your poor parishioners."

The bait was as tempting as if a more cunning mind than Kaspar's had devised it; and the Bishop replied: "Although your wish is rather too worldly a one, my good son, for me to enter into, yet your pious intentions redeem the vanity of such a desire; and I should be to blame if I deprived the poor of such a munificent gift, for

want of attempting what my feeble credit may achieve."

"You may be sure, father, that the sack shall hold full measure," observed Kaspar, to clench the favourable leaning of the holy man.

"God's will be done in all things!" ejaculated the Bishop, "and if it be His intention to ennoble your race, I know not why I, His humble servant, should attempt to thwart His decrees."

So saying, the Bishop pronounced a parting benediction, and the carriage drove off somewhat heavier than it had arrived.

The delighted pair were at least two inches taller in their own estimation on resuming their seats at table; nor could they withhold from their guests the charming intelligence, that their "friend," the Bishop, was going to get them a title and send it them; though, as Kaspar honestly confessed, he did not understand how it was to be sent, nor what it would look like, only he was sure it would make quite another man of him. Hereupon the

goblets were all replenished, and the health of the future lord was drunk less riotously and more respectfully than his fortune had been toasted in the early part of the feast. The rest of the day was spent in carousing, dancing, and festivity; and when his friends left the future Baron, every one almost had something to request of the nobleman elect. Lawyer Wirrwarr, in particular, enforced his claims to his patronage, and endeavoured to impress upon him how essential a good lawyer was to a man of property.

"But how shall I employ you?" inquired Kaspar, "what use will you be of to me?"

"You will want deeds to be drawn up when you purchase an estate; for, of course, a nobleman, as you will presently be, and a rich man, as you already are, will purchase an estate," said Wirrwarr, "and then, perhaps, you will have lawsuits, should anybody deny your right to this, that, or t'other."

"Of course we must have lawsuits, now we are

going to be grand folks," said Gertrude to her husband, reprovingly, "and to begin, I wish for a lawsuit about the ham that was stolen from me at market."

"A ham stolen!" cried the lawyer, "this is serious, indeed, — and who was the guilty party?"

"A dog," replied Gertrude, gravely.

"But the dog has an owner," said the lawyer, "and we must try and find him out—but leave it all to me, I've not been a lawyer all my life for nothing,—I'll soon find some witnesses,—and if we can't find them, there are plenty to be had for money."

And Wirrwarr went away satisfied that some business would be likely to accrue to him from Kaspar's sudden elevation.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the course of the next day, Michel walked over to the Silver Swan, and having asked to speak to the landlord, who, by the bye, was busily increasing his fortune, and came down rather reluctantly, "Neighbour," said he, "it is, of course, quite out of the question that you should go on keeping an inn, now you are going to be a great man; and so, if we can come to terms about the purchase, I am your man."

Kellermann said he had no objection whatever; and they could talk about it over a can of beer. The beer was brought; but after a glass or two, Michel, finding that Kaspar talked of anything rather than the matter in hand, begged him to say

at once what were his expectations. "For it won't do to put off a matter of this kind," said he, "or the market is spoilt. I have heard already many complaints in the village about the Silver Swan, and if it is neglected for a few days longer, you may whistle after the good-will."

But Kellermann said he couldn't mention a sum at once, and must consult Lawyer Wirrwarr; and told Michel that he had better look in again in a day or two.

Michel had scarcely been gone half an hour, before the obsequious Wirrwarr came to propose to his client the purchase of a fine house in the neighbourhood, which a ruined nobleman was obliged to sell, having run through his fortune at the gaming table.

"That 's the very thing I want," said Kellermann, "so pray go and buy it for me at once."

"What is the highest sum you will give?" inquired the lawyer.

"Why, as to that, master lawyer, I am not

over particular," replied Kaspar, "only get me the house—I don't mind about the price."

"Not mind about the price!" thought Wirrwarr, "he must have discovered a gold mine at least!"

He was just bowing to take leave, when his client called him back: "One more thing, master lawyer,—my neighbour Michel wishes to buy my inn; do you arrange matters with him, and make the best bargain you can for me."

"A strange contradiction!" again thought Wirrwarr. "Any price for a house, and yet he wants to make a profit on the old inn!" But he did not make any observation aloud, and only bowed respectfully, and promised to do his best.

The fact is that Kaspar, like many other people, had grown wonderfully rapacious with his increase of wealth. And, though he had the means of increasing his fortune at will, he could not resist turning a penny by selling the good-will of the Silver

Swan at its very fullest imaginary value. After a deal of haggling, and after Wirrwarr had wasted as much eloquence as ink, in endeavouring to settle matters to the satisfaction of both parties, the terms were at length agreed to by honest Michel, on condition that the furniture should be left to make up for the empty cellar; and even so, both he and everybody else could not help thinking, when they saw Kellermann remove to a fine large house, that he had driven a very hard bargain with his former friend and neighbour.

Nor was this the only thing that made the rich upstart unpopular in the village. Lawyer Wirrwarr had, of course, followed his instructions; and having traced the owner of the dog that had stolen the ham, on the day of Gertrude's luckless expedition to market, he brought him before a judge, together with several witnesses who had been present at the transaction, and were able to swear that they had seen the dog running away with the ham. The owner

happened to be a very humble tradesman in the market-town; nevertheless, as the mischief was brought home to him, seeing that the animal could not be responsible for its actions, he was condemned to go to prison for a certain number of days, and to pay the value of the ham. At the same time the judge, with a spirit of justice superior to the mere letter of the law, could not help observing to Kellermann and his wife, that riches were no excuse for arrogance to their inferiors; and that though the law must have its course, he regretted the fine should come from the poor man's pocket. The future baron, however, only walked out of court in moody silence, and without as much as removing his nightcap before the judge.

His fine new gilt carriage was waiting for him at the door, and both he and his wife were glad to get into it to escape from the comments of the by-standers. The news of the sentence, however, had flown like wildfire through the whole town;

happened to be a very humble tradesman in the market-town; nevertheless, as the mischief was brought home to him, seeing that the animal could not be responsible for its actions, he was condemned to go to prison for a certain number of days, and to pay the value of the ham. At the same time the judge, with a spirit of justice superior to the mere letter of the law, could not help observing to Keilermann and his wife, that riches were no excuse for arrogance to their inferiors; and that though the law must have its course, he regretted the fine should come from the poor man's pocket. The future baron, however, only walked out of court in moody silence, and without as much as removing his nightcap before the judge.

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KASPAR'S RECEPTION BY HIS NEIGHBOURS.

and as they drove through the market-place to astonish all their old acquaintances with the sight of their splendour, a whole legion of mischievous urchins bespattered their equipage with mud and rotten eggs; nor did the coachman and footmen, or even the inmates of the carriage, escape being likewise bedaubed with slime and filth. Gertrude could not refrain from tears when she reached home, and saw her new toy in such a disgusting plight; but Kellermann comforted her by observing that they could soon have another carriage, and that when they got the title, people would pay them somewhat more respect.

For several days after, the new fine lady did not dare to stir out; but she found sufficient amusement in looking over the wardrobe and jewels of the wife of the ruined nobleman, all of which as well as the furniture had been purchased in the lump. As to Kaspar, he had plenty to do in making gold as fast as he could, in order to be ready to pay the first instalment of

the sum due for the house and land; and in tasting the various vintages that filled the capacious cellars, the youngest of which was much older than the oldest wine the Silver Swan could ever boast of.

On Sunday the family went to mass, and Dame Gertrude drew upon her the eyes of the entire congregation, by flaunting up the aisle in a green velvet dress with a long train borne up by a little page, and wearing nearly the whole contents of the Countess's jewel-box. She was followed by little Trudchen, together with Johann and Ulric, all bedizened with lace, feathers, satin, and velvet, so that they looked like mountebanks or dancing-dogs, while Kaspar, though the least dressed of the group, owing to his natural slovenliness, looked inexpressibly ridiculous with his velvet mantle and sword, and wrinkled stockings, with his hat and feathers in his hand, and his inseparable red nightcap on his head. Had it not been for the respect due to the place

they were in, a mighty chorus of laughter would have burst forth from among the former associates of the enriched couple—as it was, a suppressed titter just rustled like a breeze from one end of the church to the other; and then people dropped their eyes to the ground, lest they should again chance to light on the objects of their mirth. The Kellermanns had scarcely taken their seats, when in came the ruined Count with his wife, and two grown-up daughters, all very plainly dressed, but giving themselves as many airs from pride as the newly-enriched pair did from a consciousness of wealth. It was wormwood to them to think that an innkeeper should have purchased their noble castle, while they had been obliged to retire to a humble dwelling; and it was to take a peep at their fortunate successors that they had come to church on foot, from a distance of several miles. The peep, which of course was meditated in a very uncharitable spirit, almost put to flight their angry feelings, so exquisitely

ludicrous was the group; but when, on a nearer inspection, the Countess perceived her bracelets and necklace, not indeed ornamenting, but displaying to the utmost disadvantage the red arms and sunburnt neck of the hitherto hardworking landlady, she felt ineffably disgusted at such a profanation of the family jewels, and both she and her daughters eyed her with looks of sovereign contempt; while on the other hand the Kellermanns, who knew the Count's family by sight, from having frequently seen them riding about in their carriage, met their withering gaze with all the boldness of self-sufficient vulgarity. This new incident had again diverted the attentention of all present; and instead of attending to their devotions, the whole congregation kept watching the rival families, who seemed to be drawn up in battle array for the especial purpose of feeding the curiosity of the village gossips.

Long after the service had begun, and the voices of the choristers had echoed through the

building, the heads of most of the parishioners might be seen either straining to catch a glimpse of the ruined Count and the rich innkeeper, or bending towards their neighbour's ear to make some comment on this amusing scene. Nor did the preacher, on ascending the pulpit, find that he could command much more attention from his usually well-behaved flock. He, therefore, purposely made a pause in his sermon; and leaving sight of the text he had begun to illustrate, took up the subject in hand, and extemporized so eloquent a lecture on the abuse of riches, on the spirit of envy that wealth created in the minds of the unthinking, and on the necessity of charitable feelings towards one another, that he compelled his congregation to listen to him by the very personality of his representations.

When service was over, and the families of the Count and of the innkeeper had, more or less majestically, sailed out of church, followed by the whole village, Kaspar wishing to show to

all around him that the priest's exhortations had not been thrown away upon him, approached the ruined nobleman, saying: "Give us your hand, old boy, and let's be friends. Come and dine with us in your old quarters; and," added he, with a familiar chuckle, "we 'll broach a bottle of your oldest Hoch-heimer."

The impoverished gamester would, perhaps, have given way to this tempting appeal, and even overlooked the unceremonious terms it was couched in, had not the Countess half dragged him away, with every mark of disgust at what she considered an insult from a low-born fellow. Whereupon, Kaspar hastily added with more good-nature than tact: "Your ladyship needn't look so cross—I meant to invite you, too, as well as the young ladies; there's room for us all in the carriage, by taking the children on our laps."

This last observation exasperated the Countess's pride to an almost unbearable pitch. "Learn," said she, "that persons of our rank, however

poor, do not choose to associate with such as you."

The sense of her illustrious house having been summed up in these words, the proud family walked home to their distant dwelling, while the Kellermanns got into their state carriage amid the jeers of the bystanders, who were vastly amused to find that even the wealth of the purse-proud couple could not raise a golden bridge across the vast chasm that separated them from the late titled owners of the castle.

CHAPTER VII.

FOR several months after that Sunday, the Count and Countess took care not to run the risk of a renewal of such overtures on the part of the despised upstart, by setting foot within his parish; and Dame Gertrude had the satisfaction of exhibiting her jewels, and a series of new dresses, before the wondering gaze of the villagers, unmolested by the freezing looks of the haughty gentlewoman. But if time had added to the wealth of the Kellermanns, it had not upon the whole increased the sum of their happiness. If their new position had its charms, it had likewise some disadvantages. They found that nobody above themselves would visit them, while they no longer chose to associate with their

former companions. Except Lawyer Wirrwarr and a few other persons of the same stamp, who gladly partook of the profuse hospitality of a table where they ate off silver plates, and drank from golden cups, they had no friends nor even casual visitors to admire the fine things they were so proud of. Kaspar would now and then feel a secret longing to walk down to the Silver Swan, and join the peasants that sat drinking in the tap-room; but pride hindered him, although many a time when he passed in his carriage he experienced a bitter twinge on hearing a merry laugh or a joyous song burst forth from the little inn where once he reigned supreme, and he would say to himself with a sigh: "I wonder how they get on without me?" And on such occasions as soon as he had reached home, he would go down into the cellar, and drink so deep, and so long, that his servants had to carry him upstairs to bed. In fact, he was tired of being a fine gentleman, as nobody seemed inclined to allow

that he could be one, and yet so lazy withal that he did not even trouble himself to fill his coffers except when money was absolutely wanted. And Gertrude, who at first had found plenty of occupation in looking over the Countess's treasures, and setting her handmaidens to make up the pieces of brocade and velvet she had found in her wardrobe, grew tired of changing her dress three times a day, and sometimes almost longed to take up a broom and sweep the house, for want of knowing how to fill up her time. As to the children, they were growing up for all the world like wild weeds, without any training whatever. Their parents' wealth being boundless, every thing they cried for was given them to keep them quiet, and consequently there was no end to their whims. Johann had a little cart of cedar-wood inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and Trudchen had a doll dressed in a frock of Mechlin lace, while Ulric never rested till he got a kite of green taffeta, with a ruby dangling at its tail. Yet all these fancies only

pleased them for a moment, and they flung away their playthings and spoiled their fine clothes, just as if they had been aware that their father's nightcap was an inexhaustible source of wealth; like all idle children, they were discontented and fractious, and as they were playing all day long, even play had entirely lost its zest for them.

Just as things had come to this pass, a very welcome event turned up in the shape of a messenger from the friendly Bishop, who had obtained for Kellermann letters of nobility, which he forthwith dispatched to him with a verbal postscript, to the effect, that a certain sack was not to be forgotten at the end of the year. The new nobleman ran to seek for his wife.

"Gertrude," said he, "how do I look?"

"How should you look, but like a fool?" replied she in a huff, to what she considered a very silly question.

"Baroness," said Kaspar gravely, "I am now a nobleman, therefore I can't look like a fool,"

and he advanced towards a glass to survey himself in his new capacity, after which he could not help adding: "though to be sure I don't see much difference between Kaspar Kellermann the innkeeper, and Baron Kellermann."

Dame Gertrude shrieked for joy (she was not fine lady enough to faint) and flung herself upon her husband's neck, and at this moment she certainly thought him the handsomest, wittiest man alive. Here were all her dreams realized! The Countess would no longer have any right to despise her! for strange to say, the contemptuous behaviour of the high-born family had inflicted a wound that was gnawing at her heart, like a worm eating into a plant, occasioning pangs that far outweighed the delights of her altered position.

The new-made nobleman insisted on feasting the Bishop's messenger right royally, and made him sit down to table with him, when goblet after goblet was drained to the prelate's health. After three whole days spent in jollification, he

dismissed him with a noble present for the Bishop, consisting of six gold drinking-cups inlaid with agate stones, and a bag of gold for himself, that he might drink his health at every inn he passed by on his way home—a characteristic reminiscence of his former trade, which made the messenger carry away a most singular impression of the eccentric Baron's generosity, and either extreme condescension or great vulgarity. On crossing the village, his eye chanced to catch sight of the sign of the Silver Swan, when curiosity to hear more about his strange entertainer, coupled no doubt with the wish of carrying his intentions into immediate effect, induced him to enter the tap-room, where several peasants sat drinking, and to join their party. On learning that his lavish host had been formerly the host of the inn, if his wonder abated on some points, his surprise at so marvellous an increase of fortune rose in proportion, and he forthwith displayed the goblets and the gratifi-

cation he had received, observing, that large as were the profits of innkeepers in general, they must have some secret for imposing upon their customers in that part of the country, unknown to the rest of Germany.

None of the villagers present could solve the riddle, as Kaspar's good fortune had always been a mystery to every one, and finding him now to be wealthier even than they had thought, they concluded he must have sold his soul to the evil one, and wisely blessed their stars that they had never thought of enriching themselves by similar means.

The news of Kellermann's being ennobled soon spread from the Silver Swan through the whole village and all the adjacent districts, and on the Sunday following, the Count and Countess with their two daughters reappeared at church. The proud family, having made a compromise with their dignity, and considering that they could visit with *Baron* Kellermann without losing caste,

however vulgar the bearer of the title might intrinsically be, had come to the conclusion, that so rich a neighbour might be a valuable acquisition, and that they might as well put themselves in luck's way, and run the chance of his again offering them a ride in his coach; in case of which event they felt sure of securing his good graces. Instead, therefore, of the freezing haughtiness they had displayed on a former occasion, they endeavoured to appear very gracious, and were the first to bow when the new-made Baron and his wife brushed past them to get to their seats, and one of the young ladies condescended so far as to chuck little Ulric under the chin. When service was over, the Count, with whom originated these conciliating measures, from the vague hope of winning back some of his losses, was now the first to break ground by saying to Kaspar:

"Well, Baron," is all the Hoch-heimer drunk?"

"Not quite, neighbour," replied Kaspar with a familiar wink, "there's a bottle or two left that

we can crack together—if you can get rid of the Countess," added he in a sly whisper.

"The Countess and her daughters would esteem themselves very happy to see the improvements I understand you have made in the mansion of my ancestors," replied the Count gravely.

"Hurrah!" cried Kaspar, waving his hat, "then we'll have a jolly day of it, and we'll all jog home together like one family."

Accordingly the two families packed themselves into the lumbering vehicle; the Countess and the new Baroness sat on the back seat with the Count in the middle, while Kaspar jammed himself in between the ladies Ottilie and Frederike as well as his robust proportions would allow him, and the children were quartered on the community, at the risk of each individual's ten toes.

These ill-assorted elements amalgamated better than might have been expected, after being shaken

up together during the half hour it took the heavy carriage to rumble along the rugged roads leading to the now baronial mansion. The Count conversed in turn with each of his fair neighbours, and delivered little messages from one to the other, which he altered with all the tact of a clever ambassador; and the young ladies chatted away, certainly laughing more *at* than *with* Kellermann; yet thanks to the obtuseness of his Baronship's perceptions, which made their raillery pass current for merriment, they seemed the best friends in the world; while the romping, quarrelling, and shrieking of the children formed a running accompaniment fit to drown the niceties of any conversation.

When the contents of the vehicle were at length let loose from their ambulating prison, the high-born guests began the part of courtiers, by praising the improvements in the garden, which, it is true, was no longer a wilderness overrun with brambles, but one vast assemblage of all the

gaudiest flowers in the creation, disposed without the least attention to taste or the harmony of colours. Whereupon the gallant owner of the mansion immediately made up three giant nosegays for the ladies, and Ottilie and Frederike stuck theirs into their belts in frolicsome derision. But Mamma, who thought it was an excellent precedent if their host gave them everything they admired, and therefore determined to admire everything, chid her daughters by a frown, and received her nosegay with as much gravity as if the king had given it her.

On passing through the hall, Baron Kellermann made a sudden halt, and pointing to the oak panelling from whence the Count's arms had been removed to make room for his own, consisting of a swan holding an ear of corn in its beak—an ingenious allegory invented by the Bishop, in allusion to the flour-sack full of gold—he observed in language more homely than elegant: "You see, neighbour, I've hung up my own

sign here, just as you would have done if you had taken the Silver Swan of me, which, supposing you had been keeping an inn of your own, you would have replaced by your own Blue Boar or Golden Cross, or whatever it might have been."

The heads of the family could not help wincing at what they considered a sort of desecration, and finding it impossible to carry on the admiring system, in this instance, they wisely remained silent. They were next promenaded through the apartments, where the shabby old hangings had been replaced by the most gorgeous stuffs. Gold embroideries and gilt cornices met—nay fatigued the eye at every turn, and the profusion of ornament and the quantity of valuables heaped together made the whole castle resemble one vast shop. But though taste was entirely absent from the new owner's dwelling, wealth was everywhere conspicuous to a degree almost of impertinence, and the sight of these riches

caused sundry speculations to light up the features of the impoverished nobleman; while the Countess, with a smile that might have done duty for a sneer in anybody else's estimation, kept repeating before the delighted ex-innkeeper: "Baron Kellermann has so much taste!"

When the two families sat down to dinner, which, though intended for the Kellermanns only, was as profuse as the chivalrous feasts of old, when an ox or a deer were roasted whole, the quantity of plate, and the regiment of gold cups that *manned* the buffet, was a fresh matter of surprise to the wondering guests who saw no end to their host's riches. But what most struck the Count and his lady was the not seeing any of their plate upon the table, although it had been purchased along with all the rest of the things. Towards the end of the repast, curiosity at length got the better of good breeding, and the titled guests ventured to ask the homely Baroness the reason of this household arrangement.

"Oh!" replied Gertrude, "your plate does very well for the kitchen, but we wanted ours to be new."

This blunt confession of a wealth so enormous as to consign silver plates and dishes to the use of cooks and scullions, caused a momentary pause, almost of involuntary respect on the part of the illustrious visitors. The Countess looked down upon her plate and sighed, and the words, "Your servants are better off than we who dine off pewter," escaped from her lips, more like a thought embodying itself into words than a set phrase.

"You can take back your plate, if that's what vexes you," said the good-natured Gertrude, "we can get more for ourselves, and this will do for the kitchen — won't it good-man?" added she, appealing to Kaspar.

Kaspar nodded assent, as if to the most indifferent matter in the world.

The Count's family was too much delighted with

the charming prospect of recovering so splendid a fragment of their past grandeur, to attempt even a faint refusal of their host's magnificent offer. All pride, all delicate scruples at receiving such a gift from a low-born innkeeper, vanished in a moment,—the present was accepted by the Count *for the sake of his daughters* as he declared, and the generosity of their "dear Baron" was exalted to the skies by the whole family.

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM that day a treaty of alliance, of apparently the most cordial kind, was formed between the Count's ancient house and the Baron's new one,—by houses be it understood we do not mean bricks and mortar, but that more ethereal acceptation of the word that holds the same relative position to the physical house that the soul does to the body. The sins of ignorance and vulgarity were overlooked by old nobility for the sake of lucre; while the restraints of etiquette and the galling yoke of pride were borne by young nobility for the vain gratification of associating with persons above themselves. The Count's family accepted a suite

of rooms in the castle, and, in return for the princely hospitality they received, the Countess and her daughters undertook to initiate Gertrude into the mysteries of managing a train without stumbling at every step, and curtseying, and behaving like a lady of fashion; while the father was to teach Kellermann the "whole duty" of living like a nobleman, which according to his notions consisted of gaming, hawking, and hunting. But never were pupils less quick at profiting by the lessons given them than Baron Kellermann and his spouse. Gertrude tried in vain to acquire the rudiments of the science of elegance and good-breeding; the more she tried, the further she seemed to be from the envied standard of fine ladyism. Nor was Kaspar one whit nearer the mark in acquiring a taste for amusements befitting his new station. Riding was distasteful to him, boar-hunting he voted a bore, and gaming was wholly unattractive, because staking hundreds on the throw of a die, presented no excitement

where winning or losing was a matter of the utmost indifference. Still, like many other teachers who overlook the want of a genius, as it is vulgarly called, in their scholars, so long as they are regularly paid, and indeed would rather retard than accelerate the completion of their education, these high-born instructors continued to put up with the absence of all proficiency on the part of their hosts with the most philosophical indifference.

The ladies Ottilie and Frederike found ample food for raillery and amusement in the numerous awkwardnesses of the poor Baroness; while their father, who was not bringing up Kellermann for a blackleg, was quite satisfied at his acting as a sort of dummy, with the valuable quality of always losing. The excessive apathy that his adversary displayed on the occasion of the heavy losses he was constantly incurring, made the Count almost fear that Baron Kellermann's arithmetical calculations had misled him as to the amount due to him, seeing that hitherto they had played upon honour.

He therefore deemed it prudent to jog his memory on the subject, and one evening he said to him: "Do you know, Baron, I think you play deeper than you are reckoning upon? You already owe me eight hundred ducats."

"Kaspar, nodded assent, adding: "I'll make them for you, neighbour."

These words sounded strangely in the Count's ear. It seemed as if his host were a coiner of false money.

"You must be very rich to put up with such losses," continued the Count, trying to conceal the singular impression made by Kaspar's words.

Kaspar again nodded assent.

"My dear Baron," said the Countess in the most mellifluous voice she could assume, "will you not allow friends who take such interest in your welfare, to advise you to be a little more prudent?"

"There's no fear of *my* money coming to an end, that's certain," replied Kellermann.

The Count again eyed him with a penetrating glance: "And pray Baron, is this enormous fortune your patrimony?"

Not understanding the question, the Baron had recourse to silence, like most diplomatists who want to appear very profound, and merely nodded his head.

"Very odd," thought the Count, "that an innkeeper's father should have had such a fortune to bequeath," and he added aloud: "Does it proceed from a mine?"

"It is mine, to be sure," returned the matter-of-fact Baron, "since it belongs to me."

"He! he! he!" laughed the young ladies, "our dear Baron is *so* witty."

"But in plain words, whence do you draw it from, my good Baron?" persisted the Count.

"From here," replied Kaspar, striking on what he meant for his cap, and what his audience took to mean his forehead.

"Oh! from your own wits," said the Count,

adding mentally: "the very last source I should have expected."

Kaspar had sufficient quickness of perception to see that he had nearly let the cat out of the bag, and to suffer the flattering construction the Count had put upon his words to pass uncontradicted, when by that sort of fatality that so frequently impels people to make the very remark calculated to clench any suspicion that has been raised, Gertrude, who till now had been a silent listener to this dialogue, said to her husband: "Kaspar, if you think it too much trouble to get the money, suppose I give the Count his wife's diamond necklace back again, as you know I wish for a new one!" Then, turning to the Count, she inquired with the utmost simplicity whether it was worth the sum due.

The Count did not reply that it exceeded five or six times the amount of Kaspar's debt of honour; he only expressed himself quite satisfied with such an arrangement, unless, as he added, for con-

science' sake, the Baron preferred paying him in cash.

Kaspar, who was tired of the conversation, and was even beginning to nod in his chair, left the transaction in his wife's hands, who observed: "He is grown so lazy since he 's a nobleman, that he had rather I would give away my trinkets than so much as lift his arm to get any gold."

So saying, she took off the necklace, and placed it in the Countess's hands, with as much indifference as if it had been the most worthless bauble.

This conversation made an indelible impression on the high-born pair. The Count repeated at least a dozen times after laying his head on his pillow that same night: "What can he mean by making gold? Is the man a false coiner?"

The Countess persisted that there must be some more singular meaning in Kaspar's words, and

inclined to the belief that their "dear Baron," had made a compact with the arch-fiend,—nevertheless she thought there was no harm in remaining under his roof, as it was a meritorious deed to cheat the Prince of Darkness of all the money they could obtain. Therefore the worthy couple determined to go on as usual; the Count secretly resolving to win back the whole of his lady's jewels before the Evil One could come to fetch away his prey.

The whole family had acquired such a talent for living by their wits, that before long both parents and daughters were not only lodged and fed, but sumptuously clothed at the late innkeeper's expense. It was so delightful to the Count to have found a willing banker on whom he could draw to any amount, that he began to entertain a very warm regard for his host, even to the degree of regretting in his heart of hearts that he could not make a son-in-law of him, and thus attach him, or rather his strong-box, for ever to the family.

By degrees this regret, from a mere transitory thought, took such firm root, and grew and expanded to such a size, that it at length burst the feeble dams of his heart, and overflowed one day after he and Kaspar had drunk themselves into a state of maudlin sentimentality, and he exclaimed: "My dear Baron what a pity you are married, or my Ottilie should be yours."

"The Bishop can marry, and the Bishop can unmarry," said Kaspar, with the grave sententiousness of a drunken man.

"What, have you a friend at court,—a Bishop in your sleeve,—eh?" inquired the Count, who was not so far gone as his companion.

"A Bishop in *his* sleeves, papa, not mine," replied the Baron, with the gravity of a judge.

"If you have a Bishop for a friend," persisted the Count, "we shall be all right."

"Yes,—so long as I send him the sack full of gold," said Kaspar, with a nod.

"The devil!" exclaimed the Count, in surprise

"No, the Bishop," said Kaspar.

In vino veritas was an adage that the Count recollected even through the mists that partially obscured his faculties, and he felt as if a huge weight were removed from off his mind. The Bishop's acceptance of a sack of gold satisfactorily convinced him that Kaspar's riches could not proceed from his diabolical majesty's dominions. "Since this Bishop is your friend," continued he, still harping on his favourite string, "he could apply to the Pope to dissolve your marriage,—for a consideration,—and what is a sack or two of gold to you, my dear Baron?"

"Mere dirt," chimed in his associate, again filling up their goblets.

"And then, Baron," continued the Count, growing bolder from his own and his companion's state, "you would become my son—"

"Yes, papa."

"And our purse would be in common, and—Ottilie is a fine girl, isn't she?"

"Beautiful!" ejaculated Kaspar, "let's drink her health."

Ottilie, be it observed, was neither beautiful nor even pretty; but she was tall and thin, had a very white skin, and possessed that gentility of appearance in which the plump and rosy Gertrude was eminently deficient. Kaspar began to think it would be a mighty fine thing to exchange his plebeian wife for a high-born lady, and the deeper he drank the more specious such a plan appeared.

"But, Baron, mark me," said the Count, emphatically, and with that absence of all disguise imbibed from his copious libations, "when a family of thirty-two quarterings, like ours, intermarries with mushroom nobility, like yours,—no offence, my dear Baron—here, give us your hand—why, then, I say—hiccup—it's, of course, only for the pelf,—and so—you understand me?"

"Perfectly! — you want to pull my nightcap off," said the mushroom nobleman, with all the

shrewdness of perfect sobriety, and drawing down his strong-box over his ears, with a determination not to be over-reached, "but you shan't have it."

The Count stared at him as steadily as he was able, observing: "Who the deuce wants your abominable, old greasy nightcap?"

"You and your family," answered Kaspar, doggedly.

"Your crest, man, not your cap," said the Count, endeavouring to be facetious, "though, certainly, if this alliance should take place, I fancy that, unless you leave off such a ridiculous appendage, my daughter will fling it into the fire."

"Then—I'd fling her after it," said Kaspar, deliberately weighing on each syllable.

The Count, conceiving his friend's intellects to be in a state past all remonstrance, and fancying he attached some peculiar meaning to his nightcap, made no further attempts to sound him about his fortune, and merely said: "Let all this rest

between ourselves, Baron, till we have written to the Bishop."

"Mum!" replied his son-in-law elect. Notwithstanding which significant watchword he prated away to the four valets who undressed and put him to bed, about getting a dispensation from the Bishop to allow him to marry a young lady of quality. The four valets lost no time in apprising the four chambermaids who attended on the Baroness of the startling disclosures made by their master, in consequence of which the poor woman was half beside herself with indignation against "the slut, whoever she might be," who wanted to get her husband's heart away from her. But "she'd let her know what o'clock it was, before it came to that," and with these, and similar denunciations, she tired herself out, till at last she fell asleep as soundly as the unconscious Kaspar.

CHAPTER IX.

WHILE this scene was taking place in one part of the castle, the Count and Countess were engaged in deep conference in another. The illustrious head of a noble house was endeavouring to convince his high-born lady that the only way of retrieving their fallen fortunes was to sacrifice their daughter on the altar of Mammon, and to endeavour to obtain the dissolution of Kaspar's marriage on the plea of consanguinity, in order that he might be united to Ottilie. The Countess, who was of a religious turn, had some lingering scruples on the score of the source of Kaspar's wealth; but these were triumphantly over-ruled by her husband, who put forth the Bishop's authority

as an incontrovertible proof that all was as it should be, since the mere presence of the holy man would suffice to turn the gold to ashes, supposing Kaspar to be hardened enough to offer him a portion of the wages proceeding from the barter of his immortal soul. And this point once settled to her satisfaction, the Countess agreed to the propriety of the match, and undertook to reconcile Gertrude's mind to the possible fickleness of her now noble spouse, and to convince their daughter that a new Baron was better than no Baron, and that rich husbands did not often come knocking at poor girls' doors.

But the haughty Countess did not foresee how difficult a task she had undertaken! And first and foremost, on sounding her daughter next morning on the subject, she found that the maxim of "training up a child the way it should go" had the most unfortunate results, when one suddenly wants it to go a new and unexpected way. All the noble blood that Ottilie inherited from both

parents, boiled with indignation at the very idea of marrying a low-born innkeeper,— she who, in the days of their prosperity, had scarcely allowed any one below a Duke to kiss the hem of her garment!

"I would sooner go into a convent, madam," was her ultimatum.

The disappointed parents did not, however, despair from this first trial, still trusting either that time would overcome her repugnance to the match, or else to be able to persuade Frederike, who was less good-looking and more thoughtless, to enter into their views; and, while the Count went to prepare for a hawking expedition with Kaspar, his lady went in, to wish her dear Baroness good morning. She found Gertrude in a state of great excitement, with cheeks flushed and kindling eyes.

"Have you not slept well, Baroness?" inquired the high and mighty lady.

"Sleep! I should think not," returned Gertrude,

indignantly, forgetting that her troubles had not kept her awake quite all night, "and nobody would in my shoes.—Oh! the shameless hussy! if I won't give it her when I find out who she is!"

The Countess affected all the ignorance of a new-born infant, and besought the bewildered woman to enlighten her as to the who and what of her grievances.

"Why the vile hussy that wants to marry Kellermann, though I 'm his lawful wife—and I 'll let him know it too," cried Gertrude, raising her voice.

"But," inquired the Countess, hesitatingly, "are such the Baron's intentions?"

For she had understood that Kaspar had promised his future father-in-law to be discreet on this head.

"I 'll tell you all about it," said Gertrude, and sitting down, and smoothing her ruffled feathers, she repeated to the Countess the startling facts retailed through the mouths of her maids, and

which had acquired such embellishments, in the process of filtration from the original source, through all these channels, that the young lady was converted into a princess, the Bishop into the Pope, while she herself was most cavalierly consigned to a convent by her own menials.

"And when I taxed him with having let his tongue run riot in this manner," continued Gertrude, "and that too before his own servants, he had the face to tell me that he knew well enough if he had become a Baron before marrying me, he might have married any lady in the land. But, Countess, you know well enough," added she, laughing through her tears, "a noble lady wouldn't so much as look upon him."

The Countess walked towards the window. For the first time in her life she felt embarrassed, and at a loss how to reply. Just then the Count and his intended son-in-law were about to set off for their day's sport. The elder nobleman had mounted his horse, and was holding his falcon on

his hand, and looked the picture of quiet dignity; while Kaspar was making the most awkward attempts to scale his beast, an attempt which, though abetted by three or four lusty grooms, seemed of most problematical success. The Countess's gravity gave way at this sight, and beckoning to her hostess, she said: "Indeed, Baroness, I think you are right."

Gertrude looked out of window with the simplicity of a child, but seeing nothing to laugh at, being perfectly accustomed to the ridiculous figure cut by her husband, cast an inquiring look at the Countess.

"It is not his skill in horsemanship that would captivate a noble lady," continued the latter, "nor his carrotty locks surmounted by that absurd night-cap—Ha! my dear Baroness, if you did but know your own value, it is *you* who should wish to get divorced from an oaf like that — you, who might shine at court, and perhaps captivate some Prince."

Gertrude's face brightened up at this flattering prospect. For a moment—and a moment only—a vision of the velvet mantle and lace collar of the mysterious stranger passed before her dazzled imagination. Might not any woman be proud to attract the attention of such as he, for instance? Then suddenly recollecting the children: "But what would become of Johann, and my little Trudchen, and Ulric?" she inquired anxiously.

"Johann and Ulric must be sent as pages to some nobleman," replied the Countess, "and Trudchen put into a convent to get rid of her vulgar habits, till some poor gentleman, whose house is falling about his ears, will be glad to marry her, because her fortune will mend his roof and prop up his walls."

"Heigho!" cried Gertrude, "I think we were all happier at the Silver Swan, after all."

The only thing the Countess could obtain from Gertrude, was a promise that she would pretend to wish for a divorce, which, she assured her

simple hostess, was the sole way of making her husband renounce his intended plan, by wounding his vanity—the most prominent failing in his character.

Meanwhile, during the hawking expedition, which had been planned by the Count expressly for the purpose of talking privately with Kaspar, he proceeded to open the delicate negociation of substituting the younger for the elder daughter. But in spite of all his diplomatic tact, and the adroit manner in which he pretended to let out unawares how far superior her qualities and accomplishments were to those of her sister, Kaspar proved as obstinate as a mule. Ottilie suited him, and Ottilie he would have, or else decline entering the family at all.

"It's just trying to pass off a black swan for a white swan," said he, more aptly than elegantly, not perceiving that all comparisons about swans harboured a strong flavour of the shop; "but it won't do with me. I'm rich enough for

any lady in the land, and I'm Baron Kellermann."

In vain the anxious father assured him that he could not bear to think of giving up the honour of calling him son, and humbled his proud crest to the very dust under the hoofs of the horse of a man whom he ridiculed in his inmost soul; he could obtain nothing more from the obdurate Kaspar, whose pride and obstinacy, rising in proportion to the value evidently set upon his alliance, led him to cut short all further discussion by these words: "Unless Ottilie consents to-morrow, I'm off my bargain."

The Count returned to the castle, jaded and chap-fallen, and ran to inform the Countess that their prospects began to look very blue.

Gertrude, on the other hand, came forward to meet her husband, and impatient to see the effects of the lesson of worldly wisdom she had learned from her guest, instead of waiting her opportunity, and throwing out a hint, such as "If you do that,

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then I shall do this," bluntly accosted him before all the grooms, valets, and whippers in, saying: "Kaspar, if we get divorced then I'll marry a prince."

"My dear wife," cried Kellermann, flinging his arms round her neck, "this is the very thing I wished for; marry a prince by all means, and I'll marry the lady Ottilie, and we'll dance at each other's wedding."

"How, you brute?" cried Gertrude, forgetting all the dignity of the Baroness, "do you think I'll suffer the impudent slut to insult me under my own roof? Take that!" continued she, giving him a tremendous box on the ear.

To be sure Queen Elizabeth boxed Essex's ears, therefore, allowance made for the difference of habits and station, the ex-landlady of the Silver Swan was certainly the least forgetful of her own dignity of the two.

"Why, what does the woman mean?" cried Kaspar, snatching at his wife's feathers, and de-

molishing them, while she retorted by tearing off his ruff, and snapping his gold chain. A regular battle would have ensued, had not the servants interfered to separate the combatants, and the grooms laid hold of their master as respectfully as they could, while the chambermaids, who probably had "snuffed the carnage from afar," and came flocking like a troop of birds, bore off their mistress, who kept screaming out as long as she was within hearing: "Marry the lady Ottilie, indeed!—as if she'd have such a scarecrow as you!—A lady of quality, forsooth!—Marry come up!—it was but this morning the Countess said that no lady of quality would stoop to such a clown as you!" and a heap more complimentary phrases to the same pattern.

Gertrude was taken to her bed-room, and her attendants bustled about her, and put salts to her nose, expecting her every moment to faint. But the sturdy Baroness had never fainted in her life; besides she was in too great a passion for that—

and when her passion subsided she burst into tears, and cried like a child. By stepping out of her natural character, she had merely intended to make Kaspar jealous, and little did she think to receive such an answer, still less had she dreamed that the enemy was at the very door, or rather that a viper had actually stolen into her very nest, in the shape of the proud and inanimate Ottilie!

After her maids had said everything they could think of to comfort their afflicted mistress, one of them ventured to insinuate that grief couldn't fill the stomach, and that she had better come down to supper. But Gertrude declared she wouldn't sit at table again till that impudent minx was turned out of the house; a declaration she wound up by the characteristic words: "At least till I 'm no longer landlady."

Kaspar meanwhile, after being set to rights by his valet, hastened to the supper-room, where he found only the Count, and the empty covers in-

tended for the ladies. The Countess was so indignant at Kaspar's obduracy in preferring one of her daughters to the other, that she determined to be indisposed and keep her room, which meant to sup in her room; and the daughters pertly told their papa they meant to follow her example. Without inquiring into the cause of their absence, Kellermann, in whom hunger was the predominating sentiment at the moment, briefly observed: "Let's fall to, without waiting for the ladies, for I'm hungry, neighbour."

And suiting the action to the word, he began carving, and, after helping his companion as profusely as himself, he "fell to" in good earnest.

A quarter of an hour's silence succeeded, during which Kaspar concluded his partner to be as busily engaged as himself; on raising his eyes, however, to drink his health, he perceived the morsels lying untouched on his plate.

"What ails you, papa-in-law?" cried he with real concern.

"Alas!" said the Count, "it seems very uncertain whether you will ever be my son, after all."

"Nonsense, papa," said Kaspar, "the Baroness has just resigned."

"You don't say so," cried the Count in an extasy, "why, then we can draw up the letter to the Bishop this very evening."

"Where's Ottilie?" asked the lord of the castle.

"With her mother,—who is ill," replied the Count, hastily, "but suppose we send for Frederike?"

So saying he called a servant, once his own man, and sent a message to request his younger daughter to oblige him by coming down to supper, adding, in the valet's ear, so as not to be heard by his host: "Tell the Countess the Baroness has consented."

These cabalistic words brought a balm to the Countess's vexation, and she said, playfully, to

Frederike, "Do go, child, you know you are your father's darling."

Frederike jumped up, and went to join the supper, in the intention of punishing Kellermann for his indifference to her charms, by firing off the whole artillery of her wit and sarcasms against the impenetrable armour of obtuseness, that in reality screened him from her attacks.

"Well, sister," cried Kaspar, "is Ottilie coming?"

"I was unaware we had the honour of being related to you," said the indignant belle.

The Count darted a rapid look of disapproval at his daughter, and again beckoning to the valet, sent a very pressing message to Ottilie, entreating her to come and join her sister, as the Baroness was indisposed, and they found themselves only three at table, with supper enough for thirty, and several more arguments equally logical and rational.

CHAPTER X.

WHEN this second embassy entered the room where the Countess and her daughter were sitting, the mother cast an almost supplicating glance at her eldest hope, saying, in an under-tone: "You know, Ottilie, you are so much better looking than your sister."

The young lady returned a look, that said plainly: "Do you think I don't know that?" and slowly rising from her seat, she dismissed the servant with the simple words "I 'll come," and having curtesied to the Countess, walked to the door. No sooner, however, had she closed it upon her, than, instead of going to the supper-room, she flew to the part of the castle inhabited by the Baroness, and finding the whole suite of rooms

open, she reached the chamber where Gertrude, surrounded by a chorus of waiting-women, was venting her indignation against herself and family, in no very measured or chosen terms.

The sudden appearance of Ottilie's bolt upright figure and haughty countenance seemed to freeze everybody into marble, and all became hushed in a moment. The circle immediately opened to make way for her, and, at an imperious wave of her hand, the maids, accustomed to obey her rather than their mistress, immediately left the room, although the latter kept calling out: "Don't leave me with the hussy, for goodness' sake don't go!"

Had spying-glasses been in vogue at that time, Ottilie would certainly have put one up to her eye; as it was, she surveyed her rival for a moment with silent contempt, and, at length, shrugging her shoulders, "Madam," said she, "what is the meaning of what I have just heard?"

"Indeed I don't know," said the puzzled Gertrude.

"Have you, or have you not consented," continued the enraged fair one, "to the ridiculous proposition of my degrading myself by marrying that upstart loon called Baron Kellermann?"

These words, harsh and uncivil as they were, sounded like music to Gertrude, who could willingly have embraced the speaker.

"My sweet young lady," answered she, "as you say, he 's unfit for you,—and as to my consent—Lord bless you!—I only said what your mamma told me, because she assured me that was the way to make men unwish what they had wished for a moment before."

A faint smile passed over Ottilie's features at this bold stroke of maternal diplomacy, and she said: "Then you have signed no deed to this effect?"

"I can't write," replied the ex-landlady.

Ottilie reflected a moment, then extending the tip of her fingers to Gertrude, "Baroness," said she, "we understand each other. Promise me

you will never be induced to consent outright, come what will, though all the Bishops and Cardinals in Christendom should persuade you ever so!"

The homely Baroness squeezed her hand significantly.

"For," added Ottilie, emphatically, "I would sooner die a thousand times than wed this Lord—of the Red Night-cap."

"If that's the case," cried Gertrude, upon whom a cunning expedient now flashed like a ray of light, "I'll tell you a way to prevent your parents ever plaguing you on this subject again. Only do you get his night-cap away from him, and bring it to me, and I'll see to the rest."

Gertrude reasoned plausibly enough, that if she got the money into her hands she could pull the puppets which way she pleased.

"But what has his night-cap to do with it, for heaven's sake?" asked Ottilie, very much surprised.

"Didn't a lock cut off from Samson's head betray him to the Philistines?" replied Gertrude, avoiding a straightforward answer with ready ingenuity; "Do as I tell you, and never fear."

Trusting that the mystery would be explained another time, Ottilie left her new made friend, and went down to supper. The consciousness of having a solid ally in the Baroness had made her gayer than usual, and she played off a number of jokes on Kellermann, who took them all as proofs of incipient love, and several times winked at his future papa, as much as to say: "She is coming round nicely now." Frederike, whom a sign from her sister had given to understand that she was angling with Kellermann for amusement, kept enumerating all the qualifications that Ottilie would expect in a husband. He was to be an elegant dancer, an expert horseman, an accomplished swordsman, and everything in short that their burly host was not.

"And yet," said Ottilie, with a most gracious

smile, "I would overlook the want of all these qualifications in my dear Baron—on one condition."

Kaspar looked up half bewildered.

"Speak it!" cried he.

"On the condition of your leaving off wearing that odious night-cap," replied Ottilie, "and of your delivering it up to me as a proof of your obedience to my will."

"Give up my night-cap!" cried Kaspar, with a look of horror, "sooner take my life."

The two sisters burst into such immoderate peals of laughter, at the gravity with which this was uttered, that their father felt bound to interfere, and thinking that the wine had got into Kaspar's head till he didn't know what he was saying, took upon him to expound his meaning, by observing: "The Baron thinks he would catch cold without it."

"Yes, yes, papa-in-law, that is it," cried Kaspar, eagerly seizing upon this plausible version, and drawing the cap down like a criminal about to

be hung; "yet," added he, hesitatingly, "if the lady Ottilie and I make a match of it—why—my cap, like my heart, will, of course, be entirely hers."

Ottilie pretended to be satisfied with this gallant, though rather ambiguous speech, and talked of other things as if she attached no further importance to what she had said. Without being able to account for it, she perceived that it would be difficult to get the cap from Kellermann by fair words; but, like other cunning people, she determined to lay in wait for an opportunity of achieving her purpose, and no means appeared surer than affecting indifference. And, indeed, so completely were all Kaspar's suspicions lulled by her artifice, that presently, notwithstanding the lively prattle of the two young ladies, he began dozing in his chair, though, indeed, with the precautionary measure of holding his head between his hands, while his elbows rested on the table. The Count, who had shared the same fatigues as his host, and

who found no particular zest in his daughters' company, very soon followed his example, in spite of his polite efforts to the contrary, in which Ottilie had nowise seconded him, having her reasons for wishing him to be "though present absent."

No sooner were both snoring audibly, than Ottilie rose from her seat, and advancing on tip-toe towards Kellermann's chair, "Now then," said she, "will I act the part of Delilah to this modern Samson." So saying she cut off the tassel that formed the tip of his night-cap, and proceeded deliberately to unravel the stitches, and wind it off his head by degrees. She had recognized the impossibility of pulling it off without waking the unconscious owner, who, by this means, literally allowed his property to slip through his fingers without offering the slightest resistance.

No sooner had the malicious creature converted his fortune into a huge ball of worsted, than she withdrew gently from the room, accompanied by her sister, and went up to the Baroness's chamber.

PAGE 114.

THE DEPARTURE OF KASPAR'S FORTUNE.

Gertrude was sitting in her dressing-room in a costly *négligé*, the very picture of lazy opulence.

"Here is the night-cap," cried Ottilie, tittering, and holding up the ball in triumph.

Gertrude fixed her eyes upon it, and turned pale with alarm.

"When I say the night-cap," continued the thoughtless young creature, "I mean what *was* the night-cap. I concluded that, whether I brought it dead or alive, as kings say of an enemy, it would do just as well. So here's his lordship's head-dress undone."

"It is we who are undone!" cried Gertrude, aghast, "and what does Kaspar say?"

"Nothing," replied Ottilie, "for he is fast asleep. But what is the matter with you, my dear Baroness?"

"Mercy on us!" cried Gertrude, more and more frightened, "he 'll kill us when he wakes."

"Was that the way I was to escape his addresses?" inquired Ottilie, half sarcastically.

"How could I imagine," exclaimed the agonized Gertrude, "that you would destroy the nightcap, and be the ruin of us all?"

"Surely the woman is crazy," said Ottilie to her sister.

"Isn't it enough to make a body crazy," answered Gertrude, shedding an abundance of tears, "to think that one might play at toss-ball now with our whole property?"

And unable to endure the weight of her grief, the poor Baroness related to the wondering sisters the how and the why of the nightcap's being so precious, and begged them to help her to deprecate Kaspar's rage, which, she was sorely afraid, would make the house "too hot to hold them," according to her homely phraseology.

The young ladies, however, like other fair-weather friends, felt all sympathy for their "dear Baroness," completely unravelled with the cap; and, after a few common-place observations, such as "what can't be cured must be endured," and

other copy-book sort of ready-made aphorisms, they left her to get out of the scrape as best she might, morally flinging her away with just as much unconcern as they would have cast away the now valueless ball of worsted. Like two prudent girls, they immediately went back to wake their papa as noiselessly as possible, and having called him out of the room, Ottilie communicated the astounding events that had come to pass, of course *minùs* her conspiracy with the Baroness, and the hostile intentions with which she had demolished the nightcap — a circumstance that passed muster as a juvenile freak. To the Count, who was just roused from his slumbers, it all seemed very much like a dream—and certainly none of the most pleasant: nevertheless his resolution was instantly taken, with as much lucidity as if he had given the subject his earnest consideration for the last week. He told the girls to go up to the Countess to acquaint her with what had happened, and prepare for an immediate departure; and meanwhile

he went to order out the horses and carriage, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour, on pretence of having to perform a journey of the utmost importance.

The Countess's eagle glance at once perceived the policy of the measure suggested by her husband, and without losing a moment in useless recriminations, she gathered together all the jewels and costly stuffs she had received from the Baroness's generosity, besides pieces of plate and trinkets of every description, and had them rapidly conveyed to the carriage by a dozen hands, and after having well nigh sacked their rooms of every article of value, that by any stretch of conscience they could persuade themselves had been given them as a present, the family stepped into the vehicle and drove off.

"When one has sucked a fruit dry, one must throw away the husk," thought both Count and Countess, as they looked their last on the walls of their former castle; and the father observed aloud

that Ariadne had saved her lover by a ball of thread, whereas Ottilie had lost her's through the same means, which piece of dry pleasantry was the only reproach he ever made his proud daughter on the subject.

The rumbling of the wheels was just dying away, when Kellermann woke out of his heavy nap, with a sensation of cold about the head, that made him instinctively feel for his nightcap. For the first time since he had come into his princely fortune, he caught a handful of his bushy locks.

"What's this?" said he, only half awake, "this is not my nightcap," and then, neither feeling it nor seeing it, he began to vociferate with all his might, "Holloa there—varlets—thieves—murder—help!—I'm lost and ruined!"

His yells soon brought the whole household to the rescue; but in vain did he rave and scold with the most frantic gestures, none of his menials could throw any light on the subject. Each was ready to swear that nobody but the Count and the young

ladies had been into the room; still they bustled about to find the lost article, though concluding their master must be half seas over to kick up such a fuss about a greasy old nightcap. After a pretended search through every corner of the house they returned to inform their lord that not a vestige of the cap was to be seen.

"Where 's the Count?" cried Kaspar, abruptly, "fetch him this minute, as well as the two girls."

The servants demurred, fearing a fresh outbreak from their passionate lord; when the Count's former valet, bolder than the rest, informed his present master that the noble family had left the castle.

"Ha! then it 's they that have stolen my nightcap!" vociferated Kellermann, "but I 'll pursue them — Lawyer Wirrwarr shall get my nightcap back from them—a pack of swindling ragamuffins as they are!—Saddle all the horses—get torches —and let's be after them."

The servants moved neither hand nor foot, partly from a lingering respect to the Count's

family, and partly because they really did not know what to do. It is a dangerous speculation to buy servants with a house; their veneration for the walls is very apt to exceed their respect for a new inhabitant. The valet undertook the part of spokesman.

"They are already too far for us to reach them," said he, in a tone of respectful remonstrance, "but perhaps your lordship will let us help you to bed?" added he, going up to him with the caution with which one would approach an untamed bear one wants to muzzle, and making a sign to the others to help him if necessary.

"Stand off," roared Kaspar, starting to his feet, and overturning the supper-table, and trampling everything under foot in his insensate rage, which made him forget that he had no longer the means of replacing his valuables. Then suddenly breaking through the ranks of his now really alarmed servants, he reeled upstairs, and after a zig-zag progress through endless galleries, with the whole

household at his heels, he burst open the door of the Baroness's dressing-room, tumbled in, and flung himself on the sofa, ejaculating in monosyllabic accents, seemingly unconnected, but of terrible significance to Gertrude, "Wife — the cap — lost — gone!"

"Indeed, indeed," said Gertrude, deprecatingly, "it was all the lady Ottilie's doing, not mine!"

"Doing?" cried Kaspar, "what? speak — did she steal it?"

Here his eye rested on the tell-tale ball that his wife was still holding in her hand, and a dim consciousness of the whole horrible truth began to dawn upon his confused brain.

"It was your fault, husband," cried Gertrude, frightened by Kaspar's glassy look into blurting out the worst at once, "if you hadn't talked of getting rid of your lawful wife, I should never have told the young hussy about the cap."

At these words Kaspar sprang like a panther from off the sofa, and drawing his dagger from its

richly chased sheath, would have plunged it into the luckless Baroness's bosom, had not his foot slipped, which occasioned him to fall sprawling at full length on the floor.

The frightened Gertrude picked up the dagger that had well nigh turned the scene into a domestic tragedy, and snatching up the light, ran and locked the door on the other side, leaving the lord of the mansion to get out of the scrape as best he might. His Baronship, however, had too often made acquaintance with the floor for a bed after his jolly bouts in the days of the Silver Swan, to be much put out by its hardness; therefore after a few vain attempts to recover the centre of gravity, he was content to remain where he was; and exhausted by his own violence, he soon fell into as sound a sleep as if he were still the master of untold thousands, or the veriest philosopher on the face of the earth.

CHAPTER XI.

ON the following morning the ruined couple soon made up their differences—indeed, on drawing upon the balance of offences, it was found to preponderate most awfully on Kaspar's side, although the loss of fortune was clearly attributable to Gertrude alone; but mutual misfortunes have a wonderful power of softening people's anger towards each other, and the Kellermanns perhaps never felt more cordially attached to each other, than at this trying moment, when their friends of yesterday had quite forsaken them.

Gertrude had spent half the night in knitting the ball of worsted into its old shape, and tried to comfort her husband with the notion that, when completed, it would do just as well as before. And on

this frail hope did they subsist, during the interval required for a task about as little likely to be succesful as that of setting humpty dumpty on his wall again. At the end of a few days, by working so incessantly as to make her fingers sore, Gertrude had managed to reinstate the old nightcap to all appearance as it used to be—only somewhat shorter, as might be expected — and Kaspar proceeded to fling it over his right shoulder, and listened with a beating heart for the jingling sound that would have been as welcome to him as the tinkling of a ram's bell to a traveller benighted in an unknown district. But no sound was heard, and on picking up the nightcap it proved empty.

"If it could but furnish us with silver, it would be some comfort," said the disappointed, yet still ambitious Kaspar, flinging it over the other shoulder; "yes, if it were only copper I would be satisfied," added he, finding that even his more modest wish was not granted.

But neither silver nor copper was ever to be coined again by this singular mint. The spell was broken, just as the spring of some childish toy is destroyed by rude or wilful hands, and rendered for ever useless. The nightcap might indeed keep him warm on a winter's night, but it was quite clear it would never again make a *warm man* of Kaspar, according to the vulgar saying. No children ever mourned over their lost toy with more heartfelt sorrow than did the Baronial couple over their exhausted treasury, nor could Gertrude help shedding tears, on finding that she had lacked the skill to knit a money-making cap; for the stitches, as she observed, were mere ordinary stitches after all. How many wiser persons than she are constantly mistaking the letter for the spirit! Still, as all their lamentations could not alter the course of things, they were obliged to put up with their misfortune, and even ate their dinner as usual, with almost as much appetite as heretofore.

"But now I think of it, dame," said Kaspar, "we had besides a green silk cap—suppose we try if we can't find out the use of it?"

The green nightcap had been forgotten in a drawer, when they sold their property to Michel; so Kellermann determined to walk over to the Silver Swan and try and get it from the present landlord, whom he knew to be the very soul of honesty; and with this involuntary homage to his long neglected neighbour, he immediately set off, trying all the way to hit upon the best expedient of getting it from him without letting him suspect its possible value.

Michel was not a little surprised at Baron Kellermann's condescension in coming to visit his old haunts; and more so still at his familiar address of "Well, neighbour, how goes the world with you?"

"Why, pretty well," replied Michel, "by the same token that I was coming to your lordship to present you the fruits that grow in my garden."

"How so, neighbour?" asked the Baron, "we're

at no loss for fruit at the castle, thanking you all the same."

Michel laughed and shook his head.

"I 'm talking of another species of fruit, Baron," said he, "for in digging yesterday in the garden, I came upon a heap of silver coins, and if you have sowed them there, of course you 've a right to reap them."

Kaspar recollected having buried the silver, and would just now have been glad enough to get it back, but he reflected that he would either look very mean, considering his vast fortune, by taking it from his industrious neighbour, or, if he were to own himself ruined, and to relate the story of the nightcap, he would put it into Michel's head to refuse letting him have back the other cap. So he made a virtue of necessity, and magnanimously allowed his successor to keep all he had found, on the sole condition of surrendering up the green nightcap.

"Of course you shall have it, Baron," said

Michel, "but I have used it so often that it is rather shabby for a rich lord like you."

"Used it!" muttered Kellermann, half aloud, "can he have found out anything?" then he added: "Never mind, neighbour, we must not be over wasteful, however rich we may be,—and I wear out a great many nightcaps."

He then ordered a bottle of wine to be brought him, and sat down to enjoy himself, while the landlord went to fetch the cap. The well-known room and the familiar objects seemed to refresh the jaded senses of the woe-begone Baron, who could not but admire the neatness and order that reigned throughout the new establishment. "Mike is happier than I," said he to himself with a sigh, "he has risen in the world and has no fear of a fall."

Michel now came back with the cap, which Kaspar seized hold of with nervous alacrity, and hastily wishing the host good morning, he left the inn so abruptly that everybody thought he must be out of his wits.

On reaching home, Kellermann made all sorts of experiments upon his newly recovered property, to try and discover its hidden qualities. But after tossing it up, and putting it into all his pockets, and pulling it out again, and twisting it this way and that, he was obliged to come to the sad conclusion that it was but a common nightcap after all. Still, when night came, Gertrude advised him to put it on, as there was no telling what might turn up, and it might, perhaps, make him dream of a treasure; for neither the wife nor the husband could find it in their hearts to give up the notion that something of the kind was to be elicited from a cap that had come to them in a similar way to its more valuable contemporary. Accordingly Kaspar put it on, and for awhile the great leveller sleep made him as happy as when he was the richest man in Germany, or in the unambitious days when he "ruled the roast" at the Silver Swan.

The first question Gertrude asked him in the

morning was about the hoped-for treasure. "Where was it to be found—and when?"

"Do you know," said Kaspar, "I dreamed that I was again the landlord of the Silver Swan, only it was twenty times larger than it used to be, and there was a whole regiment of cooks and scullions under me, and we were preparing a grand feast."

"Tush," said Gertrude, "a Baron, indeed, cooking dinners! But did you dream nothing to the purpose?"

"Only what I 'm telling you," replied Kaspar. "And so the feast, which consisted of upwards of five hundred dishes, was all served up on silver, on a table that kept lengthening and lengthening till it stretched away out of sight, and seemed to reach as far as Ems. And who do you think it was for?"

"How should I tell?" answered the Baroness, who seemed to think her husband's dream was of a very vulgar tendency.

"Why for the noble stranger with the velvet

mantle and gold chain, that left us the green night-cap. He rode into the court-yard on a milk-white horse, accompanied by a numerous train, all as well dressed as himself, only he looked the king among them. Then he got down from his horse without any help, such as I want, and walked up to me through a lane of cooks in their white aprons, who were brandishing their silver sauce-pans and golden ladles in token of joy at his arrival. And as he passed under the sign, which was a swan of massive silver, it clapped its wings and began to sing most beautifully; and then he said to me: 'Baron Kellermann,' for he was too polite not to give me my title, 'I 'm rejoiced that you have come to your senses at last, and congratulate you on having discovered the real use of the green nightcap, which you despised at first, because mankind are apt to set less store by reason than by riches; but trust me, a little wisdom will be of more service to you than riches,'—I think these were his words, and then he went on to say some-

thing that I can't remember, about two principles governing men's lives, one for good and the other for evil; but at last he wound up with: 'And so, my boy, I'll patronise your inn, and I've come with a few friends to give you a turn.' The 'few friends' then came tramping along in countless troops, and began to place themselves at the endless table, and the more they kept coming the longer the table became, and this lasted for a full hour, and I left them hard at it when I woke."

"And what of all this nonsense?" said Gertrude, snappishly.

"Why," said Kellermann, "it has given me a capital hint. Now that we are ruined, what can we do better than take to our old trade? We will sell off all the costly things, keep some of the servants, and all the horses, and turn the castle into an inn; and I'll buy back the goodwill of the Silver Swan, and get Michel to come and help us, as he seems clever at the business, and well he

may when he has had the use of the cap all this time,—and I 'll warrant he 'll make a merrier companion than the Count."

Gertrude could not help thinking her helpmate's notions had grown mighty plebeian in the course of a single night; but she consoled herself with the idea that she should still be a Baroness in spite of everything; and, as she was heartily tired of the fine lady life she had been leading, she was, at heart, scarcely sorry for the change.

The proposed plan was immediately put into execution. Kellermann walked over to his old premises with a far lighter heart than the day before, when he still hoped to regain his fortune, and ordering wine as before, he requested Michel to join him. No sooner had they filled their glasses, than Kaspar said: "Neighbour, let 's drink success to my new establishment."

"What may that be, Baron?" inquired Michel.

"Oh, you needn't Baron me any more," replied the ruined capitalist, "I 'm once more plain Kas-

par Kellermann; and to be brief—I wish to purchase back my inn."

Michel had not eyes enow to stare sufficiently at this unexpected intelligence.

"You shall fix your own price," continued Kaspar, thinking he was hesitating from some recollection of their former bargain, "and we 'll have no Lawyer Wirrwarr, but manage our matters like two brothers."

Michel scratched his head, and considered awhile, and then said: "I was afraid all along, Baron, that you were living too fast. But, however, now the worst is come to the worst, I won't be hard upon a neighbour, so I 'll turn out, and the lump of money you gave me the other day will serve to set me up somewhere else."

But Kellermann, who had grown more generous since his adversity, flatly refused any such thing; besides he did not want the house any way. So it was agreed that the sign was to be taken down, and Michel was not to accommodate man or beast

any more, (except, indeed, he chose to do so gratis,) and Kaspar was to pay him a handsome sum which should enable him to increase his farm, and purchase a vineyard, for, unlike himself, Michel preferred a farmer's life to the more bustling one of major-domo to the magnificent hotel that was going to be formed on such a giant scale, and therefore refused all the tempting offers made him by its future landlord.

These preliminaries being settled to the satisfaction of both parties, Kaspar lost no time in carrying his plans into effect. The costly furniture of the castle was sold off, with the exception of that belonging to one suite of rooms, which Kellermann reserved, nominally, in case of a royal visit, but in reality as a state apartment for the generous stranger who had given him the green nightcap, in case he ever honoured him with another visit. Having realized a large sum by the sale of the superfluities, of which he resolved to take better care than he had hitherto done of his fortune, he

next reduced the number of his servants, and then hung up a splendid effigy of the Silver Swan, and waited for the customers luck would send him.

As luck would have it, these were not long wanting. The valuable properties of the waters of Ems for curing consumptive patients, were just beginning to be made known in the neighbouring districts, and occasionally travellers came from afar to seek the inestimable blessings of health, at the expense of a tedious, and, in those days, difficult journey. All these pilgrims worshipped at the shrine of the Silver Swan—still the only inn of the place—which their votive offerings bid fair to turn in time to the golden swan. The picturesque situation of the castle, and the beauty of the interior, together with the singular feature of its Baron innkeeper, excited the interest and curiosity of most visitors; and these never failed, on their return home, to trumpet forth the merits of the hotel near Ems—the only mode of advertising in times

when the proverb of "good wine needs no bush" was still held in reverence.

It will, perhaps, be thought that the Count and his family never set foot again in their ancestral abode? No such thing. In spite of dissimilitudes of tastes, habits, and dispositions, there seemed to be an invisible loadstone of attraction that drew the two families together—which loadstone might, perhaps, be more properly translated by the word mutual interest. At all events, if the Count's family were quick to perceive that their old acquaintance was about to rise again in the world, and that it was politic to renew their intimacy, and to send back the carriage with their compliments and thanks, Kaspar, on the other hand, was not slow in discerning all the use that might be made of such well-born personages as baits to catch customers. And this kind of angling succeeded so well, that the noble family was always entertained scot-free at the Silver Swan—or the castle, as they chose to call it—on the tacit agreement of the

Count's bringing each season a certain number of gudgeons, to whom, during the winter, which he now always spent in town, he had diligently recommended the waters of Ems as a cure for every disease under the sun. Even the young ladies abetted their papa's puffing system, by inveigling every man that flirted with them to meet them at Ems, where their paternal castle was situated, as they averred; — and, indeed, so well did the scheme answer for all parties, that, at the end of a few years, Ottilie married a lame Landgrave, who came to the waters in the hope of being soon well enough to dance a saraband; and Frederike was fain to take up with a Piedmontese ambassador, old enough to be her father, who had fancied he should be restored to youth by a trip to this second fountain of youth. Even after their daughters were provided for, the Count and his lady continued coming to Ems every year, so much did they feel at home at the Silver Swan—a feeling fostered by no bills being ever presented for payment,—and

by degrees their pride grew to brook the sight of the sign hanging over their ancestral door, and sought consolation in the fact, that, at least the inn-keeper was a nobleman, which, in their eyes, lessened the degradation of their castle, as well as allowed them to accept the hospitality of the good-natured owner.

While the high-born pair enjoyed, in fact, the use of their oft-regretted mansion, nearly as much as in days of yore, the inn-keeping Baron and Baroness were certainly far more in their proper element, and derived more satisfaction from the present destination of their princely abode, than in the days of their splendid idleness. Rescued in time from his habits of drunkenness, Kaspar became once more an affectionate husband and father; while Gertrude, abjuring feathers and diamonds, returned to her former good-natured simplicity of character, that used to make her equally a favourite with her neighbours and customers; and a year had scarcely flown over their

heads before the now contented couple not only ceased to regret the loss of the red nightcap, but owned they were far happier than they had ever been before.

Nor did neighbour Michel feel the loss of the green nightcap, as, indeed, we can hardly miss that which we are not aware we ever possessed; his excellent sense and good management made him prosper beyond his hopes, and if Kellermann sometimes felt a twinge of remorse for having deprived him of so valuable a guide, he quickly salved his conscience with the reflection that really Michel stood in no need of it.

The Bishop alone, perhaps, had a better right to be dissatisfied than anybody else, seeing that, after fulfilling his part of the compact by procuring the title for Kaspar, the sack of gold was not forthcoming. As, however, the conscientious Baron continued sending him yearly a kind of peppercorn rent, consisting of a sack of flour, which, in time, improved into a sack of copper coin, the

holy man was obliged to take the will for the deed, and put up with the humble mite in lieu of the Pharisee's gift.

As to the green nightcap, which, by the help of his dream, Kaspar had found to be the cap of wisdom, he preserved it with religious care, and consulted it like an oracle, always putting it on over-night, when he had any weighty matters to decide upon the next day—from which, no doubt, the phraseology of consulting one's pillow was originally derived. And, indeed, so well did it direct him in everything, that he grew renowned in the neighbourhood for his excellent judgment, and people came to consult him on all knotty points; so much so that he might have set up in opposition to Lawyer Wirrwarr, had he chosen to accept fees for his advice. The inn prospered beyond all his expectations; and, as fore-shadowed in his dream, it finished by reaching Ems; for his children's children grew rich enough to purchase another hotel in that town, besides a vast establish-

ment for baths, and ball and concert rooms. And not the least remarkable fact was, that this race of innkeepers were all conscientious and upright, as long as the green nightcap, which remained an heir-loom in the family for the use of all Kaspar's descendants, retained its wonderful power. But the "march of intellect," which has stolen a march upon all old institutions, and not respected the fairy folk, has long ago analysed the green nightcap, and proved it to be nothing but silk stitches formed by knitting-needles, and ever since this decree, fulminated at the beginning of the present century by a professor of philosophy fresh from Gottingen, it has ceased to give forth oracles, and the present innkeepers of the Silver Swan are therefore grown quite as extortionate as the rest of their brethren all the world over.

THE END.

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